



How Can We Make Microfinance More Useful to Women?



Empirical Evidence of Gender-specific Behaviour

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Assumptions on gender-specific needs: most MF for women

- Small savings and loans
- Micro-insurance
- Group-based
- Local access
- Female staff

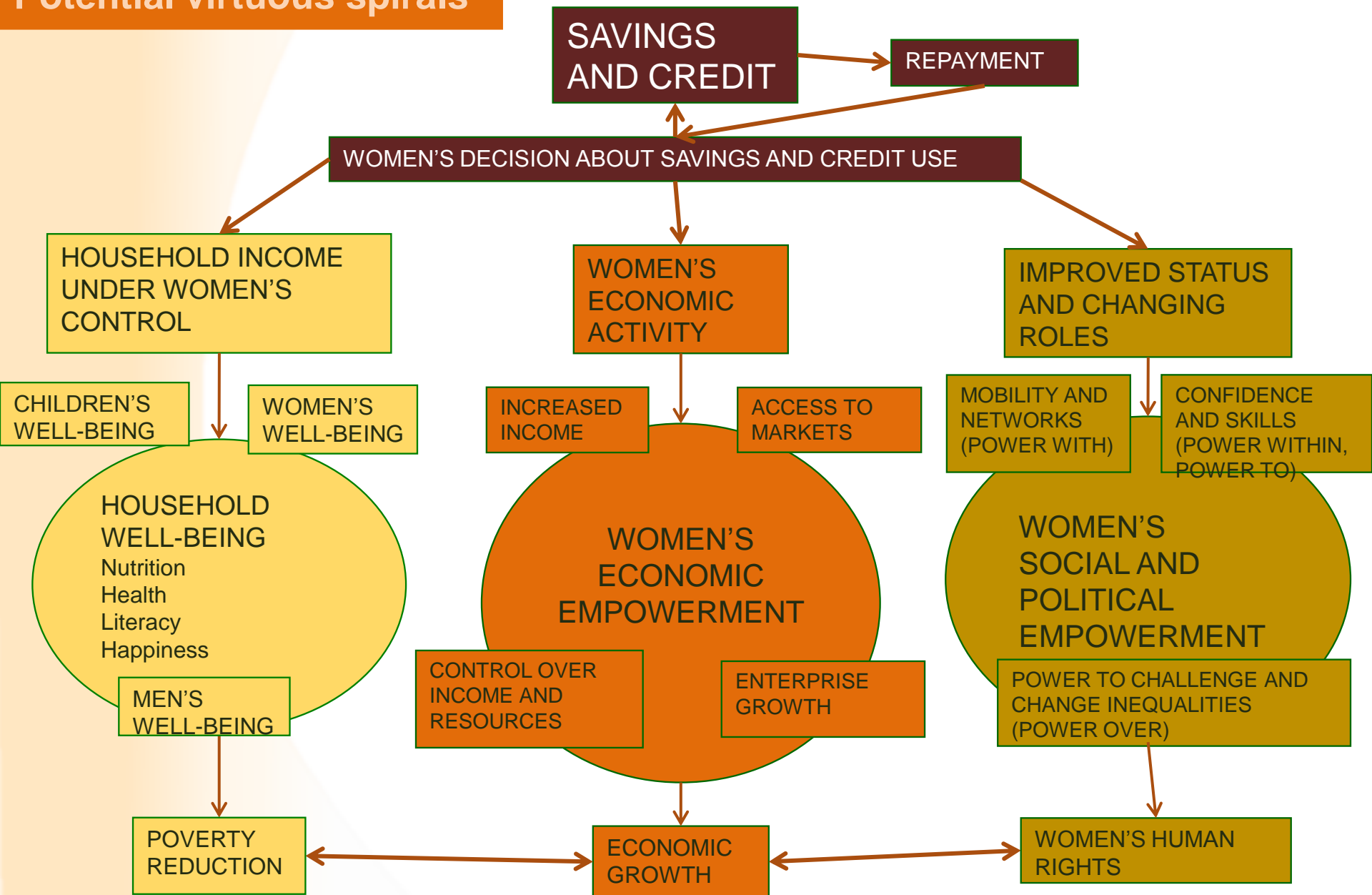
Most gender impact studies have dealt with only these types of MF and only for women



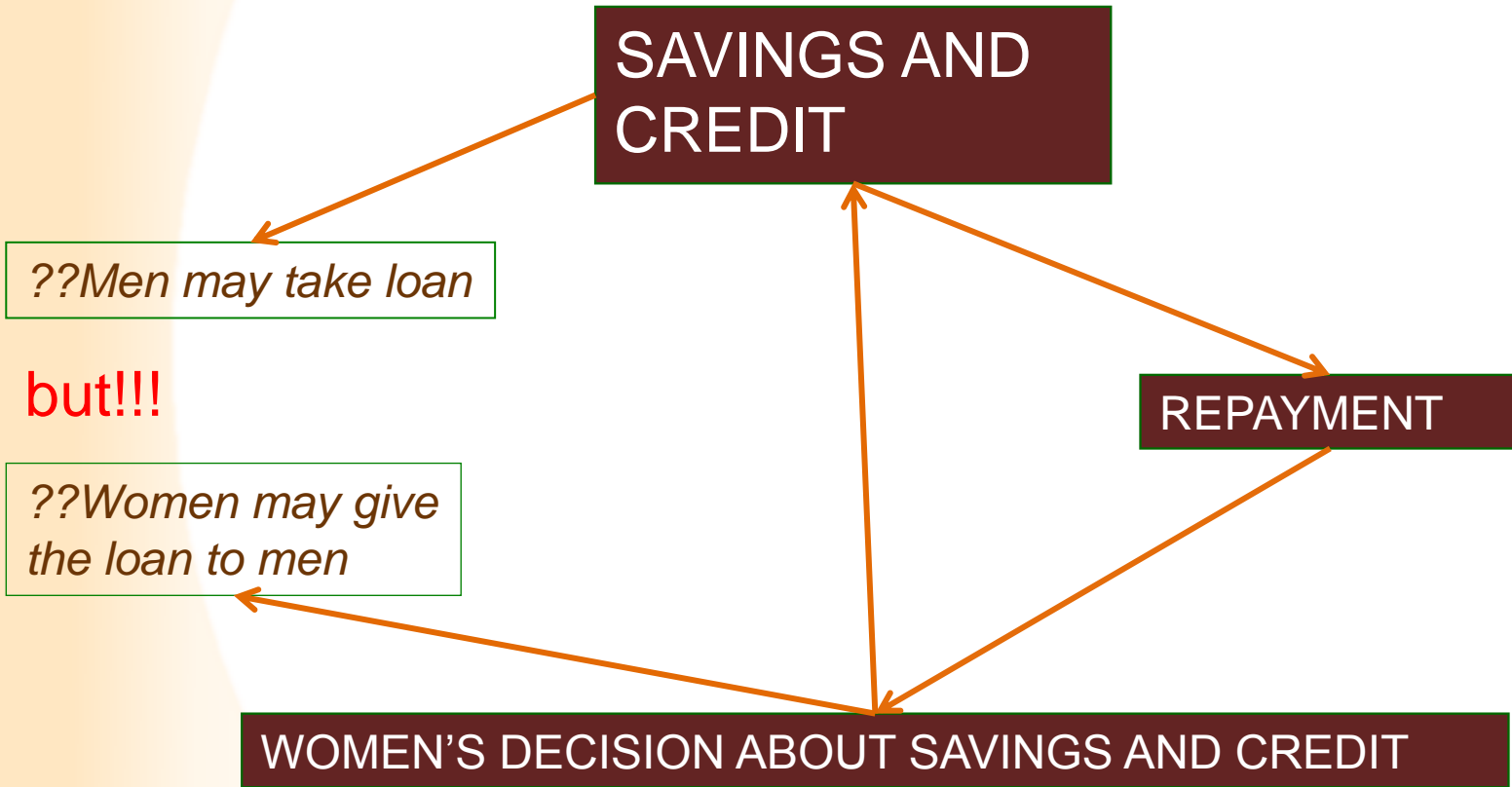
Gender assessment micro-finance

- **Causal process approach** – examining what MF does and the potential impacts
- **Universal rights approach** – uses a set of universal criteria across development interventions
- **Participatory approach** – understanding what women and men want as the basis for assessing change
- **NEED** all three integrated in the planning process
- And look at impacts for men as well as women

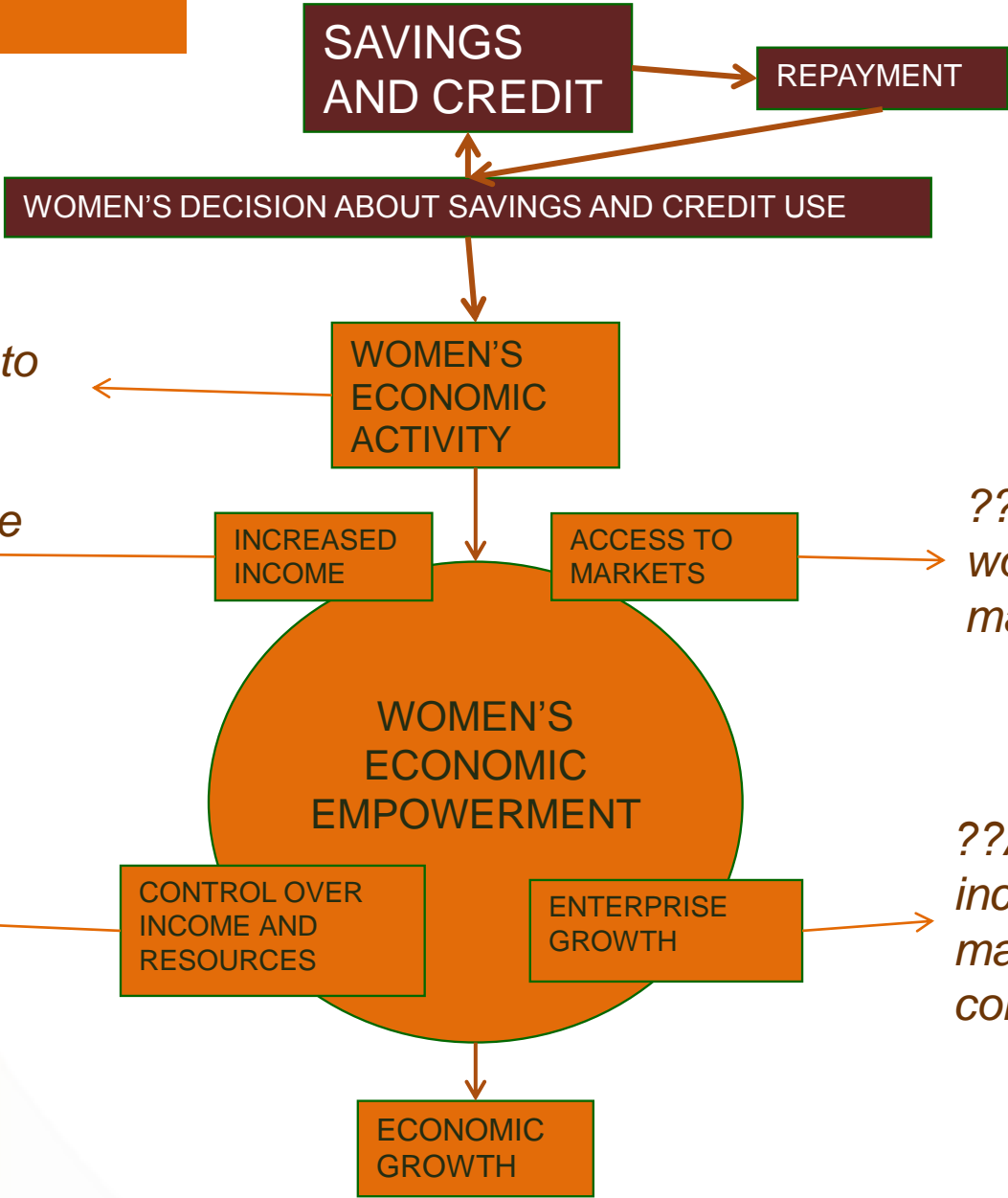
Process approach: Potential virtuous spirals



Questioning complacency



Questioning economic empowerment



?Diversion of loan to other uses

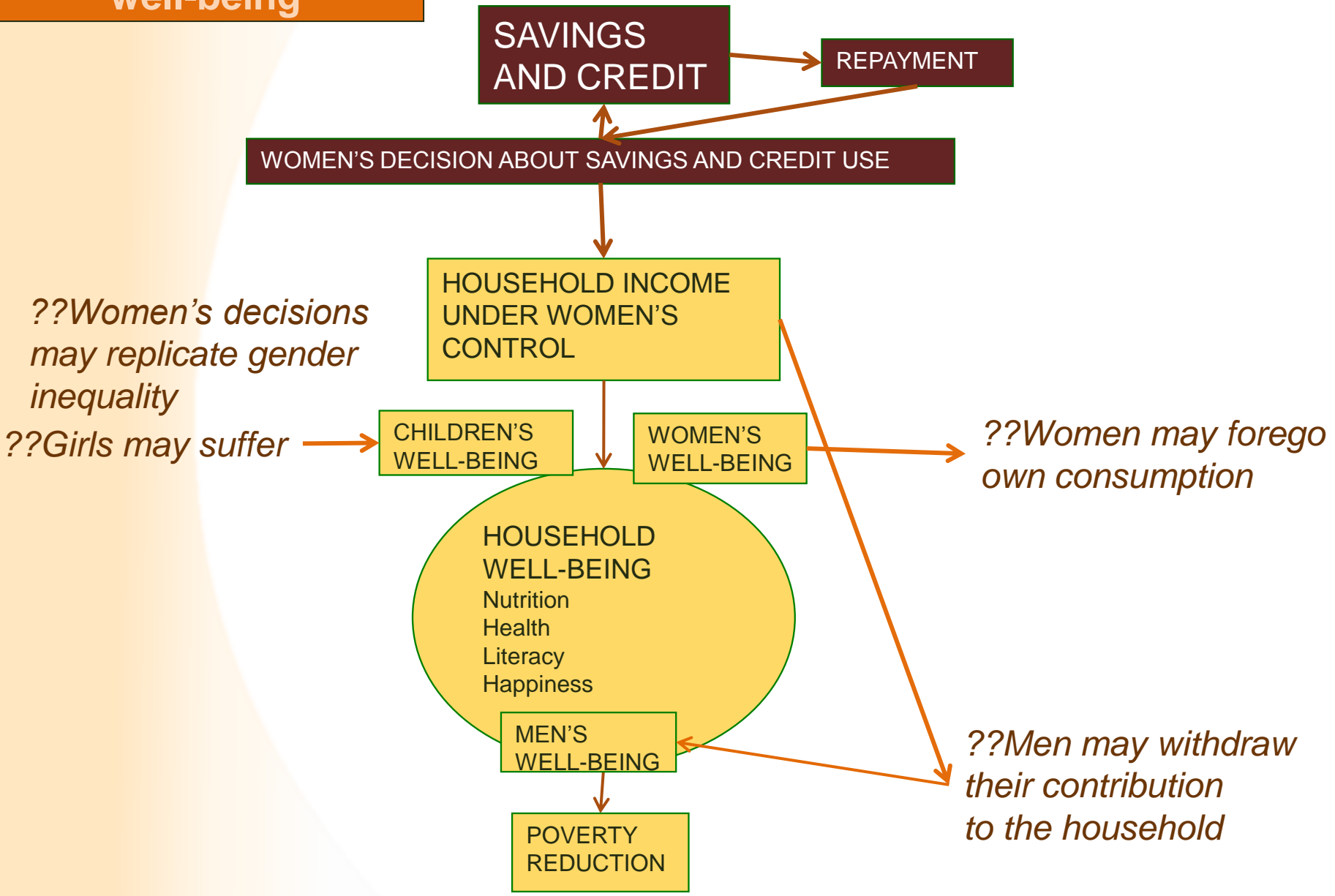
??Incomes may be very low

??Women may work from home with marketing by men

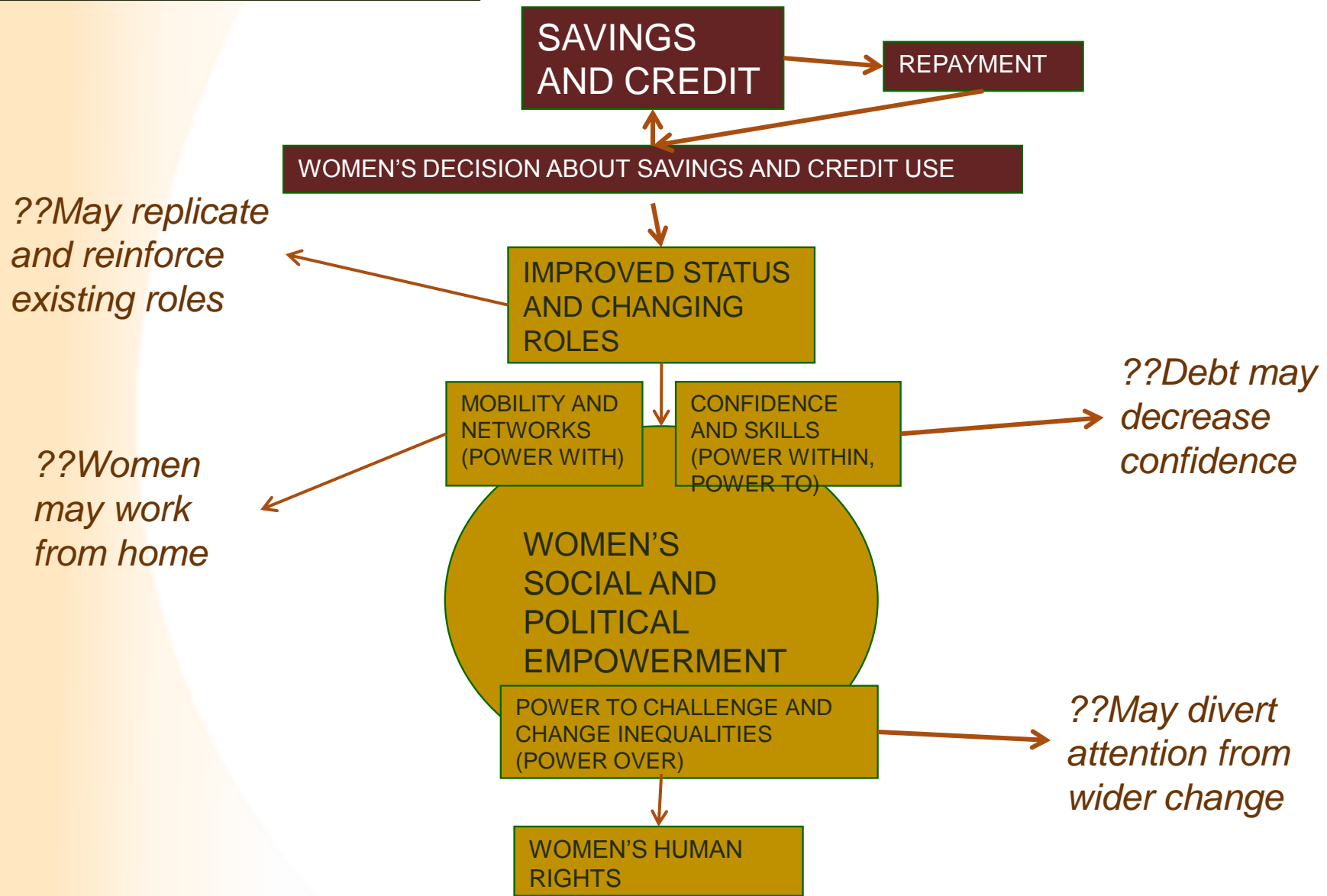
??Men may control income

??All women's income may go for consumption

Questioning well-being

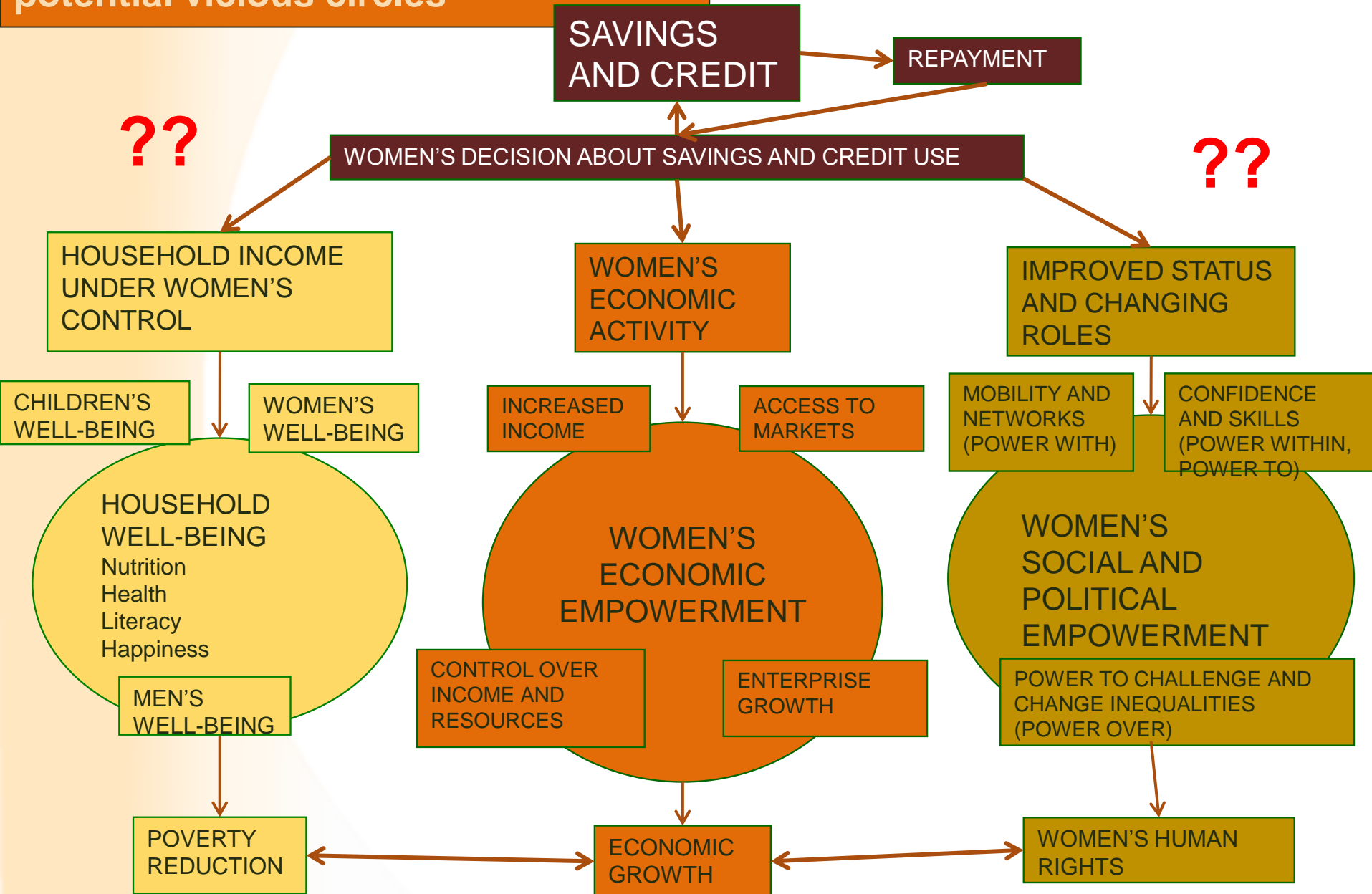


Questioning social and political empowerment



Microfinance and disempowerment: potential vicious circles

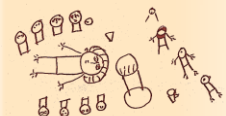
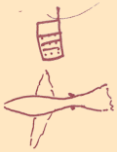
ALL ASSUMPTIONS MUST BE QUESTIONED



Pakistan: complexity



- Gender inequality has serious consequences for women, children and men
- Many women and also men want change
- Microcredit intervention has no effect on the bargaining power of women within the household for child related, health, economic and social mobility decisions;
- Microcredit intervention can empower women in household decisions where they are usually least empowered, such as decisions relating to purchases of large and expensive consumer goods.
- But impacts can be negative





Wider constraints on women's economic activity

- Lack of access to financial products and services;
- Family responsibilities;
- Risk aversion;
- Social conventions;
- Lack of education and training;
- Lack of knowledge of technology
- Involvement in low paid services and employment



'Women' are not one category

Poorer women and better-off poor women

Small, medium and large entrepreneurs – problem of the missing middle

Service industries and wage employment

Girls and young unmarried women

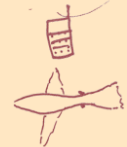
Other single women

Older women

Culture and ethnicity

Quality of household and family relationships

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES



Some key questions

- Differences and power relations between women
- Are we seeking to help women cope with existing inequalities? Does this merely serve to perpetuate and even strengthen these inequalities?
- Or are we looking to enable women to challenge and change these inequalities?
- What about implications for change in products and services for men?
- Linkage between micro-level and macro-change?



Questions??

RESOURCES

<http://www.wemanresources.info>

Gender Mainstreaming/Financial Services

